

# SONGS THE GREATEST SINGERS LOVE THE BEST

## Grand Opera Artists, Oddly Enough, Prefer Ones Not From Roles by Which They Are Most Widely Known.

“WHAT is your song of songs?” That was the question put to our leading grand opera artists, and it brought many interesting answers as to what they hum, whistle or sing when they are pleasing themselves and not trying to please the thousand or more critical opera-goers who fill the Metropolitan and Manhattan houses.

Drawing on the imagination for a concert, with each artist naming his own number and the public be hanged, this is how the programme would read:

1. Prologue “Pagliacci”.....Leoncavallo Antonio Scotti.
2. O Patria Mia, “Aida”.....Verdi Claudia Muzio.
3. Il Mio Tesoro, “Don Giovanni”.....Mozart Charles Hackett.
4. Flower Song, “Carmen”.....Bizet Lucien Muratore.
5. Pace, “Forza del Destino”.....Verdi Rosa Ponselle.
6. Deux Grenadiers.....Schumann Leon Rothier.
7. Largo al Factotum, “Barber of Seville,”.....Rossini Giuseppe de Luca.
8. Caro Nome, “Rigoletto”.....Verdi Evelyn Scotney.
9. Moonlight and Dreaming.....Sturani Cyrena Van Gorden.
10. Granadinas, “Emigrantes”.....Barrera Tito Schipa.
11. Habanera, “Carmen”.....Bizet Carmen Pascova.

And by request:  
Ombra Leggera, “Dinorah”.....Meyerbeer Amelita Galli-Curci.  
Anything worth while singing.....By Anybody Mary Garden.

There is a reason behind each selection. One likes this song just for its worth as a piece of music and the joy it gives in singing. To another the aria has marked a great success in opera. And still to another it is a song of the homeland.

Those who have seen Antonio Scotti in the powdered wig and black velvet of *Scarpia* may indeed be surprised to know that it is in the gaudy clown suit of *Tonio* that he finds what to him is the greatest song for the barytone. Critics, music patrons and in fact the whole music and dramatic world agree that his characterization of the Chief of Police in “*Tosca*” is not surpassed as a work of art on any stage. But while he goes on with his inimitable impersonation of the villainous Baron, it is always a thing of joy when he can poke his head through the curtain and cry “*Si puo*.”

### Mr. Scotti Likes the Aria Better Than Anything Else

“The aria has always appealed to me as the masterpiece for barytones,” said Mr. Scotti. “It runs the whole gamut of the emotions, just a little at a time. I sing it because I like it better than anything else.”

Mme. Galli-Curci’s favorite aria about 10 o’clock on the night of February 11 was Ombra Leggera from “*Dinorah*,” or as it is more commonly called “The Shadow Song.” This famous artist was singing in the Barber of Seville at the Manhattan Opera House when the question was popped to her.

“Whatever I’m singing is my favorite,”

Below are some of the operatic stars who tell of their favorite songs. Upper row, left to right: Claudia Muzio as *Nedda*, Amelita Galli-Curci as *Dinorah*, Antonio Scotti as *Scarpia*. Below: Carmen Pascova as *Carmen* and Lucien Muratore as *Don Jose*.



she replied. But she had just bowed a dozen times to the applause of a crowded house after her interpolation of “The Shadow Song” in the lesson scene. And anyway Mme. Galli-Curci must have a warm spot in her heart for that song, for one night in January, 1918, she tripped across the stage of the Lexington Theatre and sang to her shadow in such notes that the next morning she awoke to find herself hailed as the greatest coloratura soprano in the world.

Giuseppe de Luca and Charles Hackett were in their dressing rooms during a performance of “*Rigoletto*” a few weeks ago. A few minutes before De Luca and Cora Chase had received an ovation for the tuneful duets of the hunchback and his daughter. Now, what Scotti’s *Scarpia* is to the Metropolitan so is De Luca’s *Rigoletto*. The morning after that performance THE NEW YORK HERALD said: “Mr. De Luca repeated his admirable impersonation of the jester. Other critics used the adjectives ‘superb,’ ‘admirable,’ ‘caught in the atmosphere of this great role as he was arranging his tinsel laden and belled cap, we were expecting Mr. de Luca to give the Monologo or the Povero Rigoletto or the Cortigiani, vil razza dannata. But no! In an instant he stepped out of the tragic role and quipped that gayest of arias, ‘Largo al factotum,’ from the ‘*Barber of Seville*.’”

### De Luca Recalls His First Appearance in the United States

That’s the song that Mr. De Luca has sung the world over—in Milan, Rome, Naples, Vienna, Kieff, New York and throughout the United States.

“In twenty years it has never tired me,” he said. “It’s a song of happiness, and I am happy when I sing it.”

Mr. De Luca recalled that his first appearance in the United States at the Metropolitan Opera House, Nov. 25, 1915, was as *Figaro*, and of course his first aria was the Largo al factotum.

Nor did Mr. Hackett choose from the Verdi opera. Instead he went back to his triumphs abroad and picked out Il Mio Tesoro from Mozart’s “*Don Giovanni*.”

“The composer almost overlooked the tenor in this work,” said Mr. Hackett. “The barytone and the basso and the soprano have it all their own until Ottavio finally breaks in with his Il Mio Tesoro. To me it is the most delightful of Mozart’s score, and I sing it whenever and wherever I get the chance.”

### Carmen Pascova Prefers Song Her Mother Sang at Home

“‘Twas the song my mother sang at home,” said Carmen Pascova, new mezzo soprano of the Chicago Opera Company, in explaining why she preferred the “*Habanera*” from “*Carmen*” to any other piece. In her native Spain she heard it first, and she was named after the heroine of Bizet’s work.

Lucien Muratore, greatest living French

tenor, got an opportunity during a breathing spell in a rehearsal of “*Romeo and Juliet*” to say that the “*air de la fleur* from ‘*Carmen*’ is my favorite.” He finds it a tuneful and dramatic air that the lovesick *Don Jose* pours forth to the wild gypsy girl after she has

thrown at him his cap and sword. And that he is both tuneful and dramatic in delivering his best liked aria is attested by the critics, who found his recent work in the role here “romantic and forceful.”

One singer who goes back to the role in

which she made her first and great success is Rosa Ponselle, the dramatic soprano of the Metropolitan. Three years ago she was an unknown. Then one night an old and forgotten opera, “*La Forza del Destino*,” was revived, with Caruso and De Luca and the unknown girl from Connecticut. After that night it became the most popular work in the repertory for more than a season, with Miss Ponselle sharing the honors with Caruso. That is why she likes the “*Pace*” aria from this opera above all others.

### Leon Rothier Finds His Choice

Outside the Field of Opera

Leon Rothier, soldier of France, who bears the scar of a wound received at Verdun, forsakes the field of opera and picks “*Deux Grenadiers*,” although it was put to music by the German pianist Schumann from the

## Verdi and Bizet the Composers Most Favored—Rothier, Hero of France, Likes Schumann’s “Two Grenadiers”

poem of the German poet Heine, it is a good French martial song with a few bars of the *Marseillaise* interpolated. And while he has been appearing in the leading bass roles at the Metropolitan for the last ten years, Mr. Rothier says he can find nothing which pleases him more than the musical story of the two soldiers of Napoleon on their way back to France from a Russian prison.

Cyrena Van Gorden, the statuesque contralto of Mary Garden’s company, is another who makes her choice outside of opera. She says that Cesare Sturani’s work “*Moonlight and Dreaming*” is what she likes to sing and does sing whenever she gets a chance.

“Mr. Sturani played it for me, and since first I heard it it has been on every concert programme which I have given,” she said.

“O Patria Mia” is Verdi’s greatest air for dramatic sopranos, according to Claudia Muzio, who has sung it many times in the role of *Aida* for New York opera-goers.

Verdi also furnished Evelyn Scotney with her selection. It is “*Caro Nome*” from “*Rigoletto*,” a prime favorite with coloraturas since the first *Gilda* poured forth the aria in Venice in 1851.

“They’ve all sung it from Patti down,” said Miss Scotney. “When I’m not doing it on a stage I’m singing or humming it for myself.”

Tito Schipa, who is singing the tenor roles in the Italian operas in which Mme. Galli-Curci appears, finds his song in a Spanish operetta. The air is “*Granadinas*” from “*Emigrantes*,” a work by Tomas Barrera and Pablo Casals. Mr. Schipa brought the song out while he was appearing in Madrid and prior to his great operatic successes in Monte Carlo and other parts.

Now we come to Mary Garden. What is Maestro Mary’s song of songs?

“It’s any song—any song worth singing—English, French, Italian and Spanish—I like them all,” is her answer.

## Old Time Book Agent Practically Has Gone

WITHOUT any definite realization of the fact on the part of the present generation, the old time book agent, who until comparatively recently was a familiar figure in all parts of the country, is vanishing slowly from contemporary life. His boon companions, the lightning rod agent and the raucous voiced vender of nostrums, who sold his salves and various other compounds under the flare of the gasolene touch, already have slipped into oblivion.

The increasing intelligence of both the rural and urban population has done much to eliminate the travelling quack doctor and the lightning rod man from our social life. But it is the growth of advertising—the realization on the part of publishers that books can be sold in greater quantities at a lower cost through the medium of newspapers and magazines than by the use of agents—that is responsible for the passing of the last figure in the once familiar trilogy of itinerants.

It was only a comparatively short time ago that publishers commenced to learn how to advertise their wares effectively—how to appeal to the emotions and curiosity of the book buying public. Several nationwide campaigns of publicity and advertising were conducted very successfully. The phrase “*finish this story for yourself*” became, and still is, one of the best known of all advertising slogans. The works of O. Henry, Kipling, Mark Twain, Jack London, Du Maurier and other noted authors were exploited according to modern commercial practice and the results obtained were effective. You cannot slam the door in the face of an alluring magazine ad, and it is folly to set the bulldog on your favorite newspaper just because it is attempting to sell you a set of short story masterpieces or a universal compendium of knowledge. So, in the publishing business, as in many other enterprises conducted along lines that permit of advertising, the printed word has taken the place and usurped the function of the personal salesman.

### Both Romance and Pathos in the Wandering Profession

There was a certain romantic and, at the same time, pathetic aspect to the wandering profession that practically has disappeared before the efficiency of new commercial methods. Book agents for the greater part were either innocently young or pathetically old. The field attracted those who were starting out in life because always it offered an opportunity to make a living; and it was the refuge of life’s failures, who turned to it when there seemed to be no other niche in the world wherein they could fit.

There were a few agents who were fitted by temperament to the arduous task of selling books to people who were determined not to buy them, and agents of this type found the business a lucrative one. The book agents who were successful, however, probably could have reaped rewards as great, if not greater, selling oil stoves in equatorial climes. For the book agent generally was given a greeting that accorded with his reputation at the majority of doors at which he knocked. He needed the cunning of Machiavelli to secure an opportunity even to start his sales talk, and before a sale could be “closed” he must have recourse to a forceful and insidious type of salesmanship.

Before an agent was sent into the field he was thoroughly coached in the merits of the proposition he had to present and was obliged to commit to memory various “patterns” that might be used in selling his offering. Who is there who does not remember the type of agent who lacked the faculty of being a young cherub cheeked college student who sold books in the summer to pay his tuition during the winter months at school;

### Women Commonly Proved The Easiest of Victims

The book agent, however, preferred to deal with women; he found them easier victims to his wiles than men, particularly when his appeal to them could be founded on the assumption that the literature he was selling would be of inestimable value to their children.

Perhaps the last distinctive phase of book agenting came a very few years ago with that type of salesman who urged his wares on the plea that he was endeavoring to work his way through college. For a short time agents who used this method of approach were very numerous. They were both male and female, and their introduction consisted of the simple request for the “vote” of the prospect. This opened the conversation and it then developed, according to the plausible agent, that there was a country wide contest being conducted by some benevolent association and that the person getting the most “votes” would get a free college education.

Needless to say, in order to cast a “vote” in behalf of the apparently sincere and earnest young person who applied for your patronage it was necessary for you to buy a certain book or set of books. This has produced splendid results for two or three years, but the public soon became aware of the fact that, in most instances, the assertions of the agents were devoid of truth, with the result that the “aspiring student” type of agent lost much of his or her effectiveness.

Throughout the country what might be termed the *genus itineranti* is disappearing. Charlatans and quacks of various kinds still linger in the backwoods districts, but for the greater part they have gone and left only memories behind them. The book agent, however, has left his imprint in every community—the book shelves in homes in the rural districts and the smaller cities will testify to his activities long after his species has become extinct. Now, and for a long time to come, the gloomy libraries in old fashioned American dwellings will contain the inevitable doctor’s book, “*which, madam, will save its cost in three months by eliminating the necessity of summoning the physician for those slight ailments to which mankind is heir*”; the encyclopedia “*which is a beacon light of knowledge and which should be in every family which desires the incalculable benefits of erudition*”; the impressive little volume with the black cover which “*exposes the wiles and wickedness of slick city crooks and which states emphatically, among other precepts, that one ‘must never sign a paper for a stranger*’.”

Few, save those who deplore the passing of certain picturesque phases of American life, will mourn the passing of the book agent. And yet society owes a certain debt of gratitude to the young optimists and the pessimists who made up the majority of those in the “profession.” For, in the face of obstacles that only dauntless or desperate spirits could surmount, they carried the first flickering light of culture and education into byways that otherwise might long have been left unilluminated.

## Divorce Wave Over Nation Growing Stronger

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six over 1919. In this State the figures for the last five years show little change.

Los Angeles broke its divorce record in 1920 with 2,707 interlocutory and 1,905 final decrees, as against 2,148 interlocutory and 1,856 final decrees in 1919, an increase of 26 per cent. The 1919 figures showed an increase of 12 1/2 per cent. over 1918. California’s divorce laws are regarded as “easy” and many Easterners go there for decrees. The legal grounds for divorce include non-support, cruelty and conviction of felony. Lexington, Ky., reports a steady increase in divorces since 1915, with 1920 a record breaking year. In Fayette Circuit Court 222 decrees were granted last year. In 1914 109 were granted.

### Divorces Increase in Nebraska, Although Law Is Rather Rigid

Lincoln, Neb., set a new record with 262 decrees, against 246 in 1919. 230 in 1918 and 117 in 1917. Nebraska divorces do not become absolute until after six months, and interlocutory decrees that withhold the final decree for that period are the rule. Marriage of either of the parties to a divorce before the expiration of that period are illegal, but this is no deterrent, as the couples go to some other State where the laws are more lenient.

A bill is pending before the Legislature now in session to amend the law so that only one cause will be recognized as legal grounds for divorce as in New York State.

Hughes county, S. D., in which the city of Pierre is situated, reports six divorces, an increase of three over the 1919 figures, but not a record. There were eight divorces granted in the county in 1918 and the same number in 1916. Figures for the State have not been compiled for 1920. In 1919 620 di-

vorces were granted, as against 489 in 1918 and 562 in 1917.

The Circuit Court in Kansas City, Mo., last year granted 925 divorces, as compared with 840 in the preceding year. The figures for 1919 showed an increase of about 10 per cent. over those for 1918. Eighty-five per cent. of the cases in which decrees were granted were uncontested.

### Reno Sees Passing of Divorce Industry

Special Correspondence of THE NEW YORK HERALD.

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WHEN Mary Pickford slipped quietly into Nevada and after living there one week filed suit for divorce from Owen Moore she opened the floodgates for a reform wave which placed the divorce question before the Nevada Legislature once more and served to put the question on the ballot to be voted on by the people in the election of 1922.

Not that the majority of the people of the State object to the six months’ residence law, which has attracted divorce seekers from all parts of the globe to Reno, but the people did object to the method the little actress used to shorten her residence in the State from six months to one week, and as a result the Legislature has passed a law making it impossible for divorce seekers unless bona fide residents of a county to secure a divorce in less than six months, even though both parties to the action are actually present in the county and personal service is secured.

At the next general election the people of the State will vote on a similar law. This proposed law was placed before the Legislature through initiative petition, with the business men of Reno sponsoring it. The Legislature rejected the law in order to place it on the ballot and thus settle the question for all time.

An initiative bill proposing an interlocutory decree, which was circulated by several ministers, failed to secure sufficient signatures to be placed before the Legislature or on the ballot, although the petitions had been in circulation for three months. Sufficient signatures were secured for the Reno business men’s petition in ten days, showing how the people of Reno and the State feel about the divorce law.

Reno’s divorce industry, as it is referred to nearly everywhere, is not such a flourishing industry as is often pictured, although the revenue secured through this avenue is variously estimated at from one million to two million dollars annually.

### Says 800 Divorce Seekers Live in Reno All the Time

It is estimated by County Clerk Elwood Beemer, the man who handles all the divorce actions before they get into the District Court, that Reno is the temporary home of 800 divorce seekers at all times. In January of this year 103 divorces were granted in the District Court here and more than 100 actions filed.

The official register of actions reveals some interesting statistics on divorces and their cause. Every State in the United States has been represented by divorce seekers, while foreign countries have had hundreds, with Canada leading. England has had several representatives, Australia has sent a few, Italy has had several, France some and even Russia and Germany.

Among the States New York has by far the greatest representation at all times,

while Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio and Pennsylvania are always well represented. Former New Jersey residents are numerous at all times, while the Southern States are sending more every year.

Causes of action are varied, but the majority are brought on the grounds of desertion, as this is the simplest and entails the least explanation. Failure to provide for a year and desertion for a year constitute grounds of action and are used frequently; cruelty is used in many cases.

### Corey Case Gave It Fame and Gaylor Girls Used It

As a divorce centre Reno was not known prior to 1904, when Mrs. Laura B. Corey, wife of W. Ellis Corey, came here and secured a divorce. This case was given wide publicity, and from then on the population of Reno grew rapidly with six months’ residents. Margaret McKim, now Mrs. Raymond T. Baker, was one of the prominent residents of 1911. Two daughters of former Mayor Gaylor of New York received their decrees here. Mrs. Edith Vingut secured her divorce in 1919, and Mrs. Helen G. Bedford was granted her freedom in 1920.

Madame Cobina was granted a divorce from Owen Johnson in the Reno court, and Margaret Gould secured a decree in November, 1919, divorcing Count Pierre D. Bernard.

In their efforts to avoid publicity many prominent Eastern people come to Reno and live under assumed names until their cases come before the court. Through their attorneys in the East arrangements are perfected here for them with local attorneys, providing the homes and ready to receive them on arrival. In this way they avoid all notoriety, except in a few instances, until their cases are filed.

One hundred and ten attorneys are practicing in Reno now, and more than one-half of them handle little else but divorce cases.